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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 000683

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR, EUR/WE-MENNUTI, NEA, S-KELLY AND GRAZE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [VT](#) [VTPREL](#) [VTPREL](#)

SUBJECT: SADDAM MEETING WITH CARDINAL ETCHEGARAY: VATICAN  
SEES "LAST CHANCE FOR DIPLOMACY"

REF: A) VATICAN 641

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CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON, REASON E.O. 12958 1.5 (B,D)

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SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST  
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1. (C) THE HOLY SEE'S MIDDLE EAST DIRECTOR, MONSIGNOR FRANCO COPPOLA, WHO ACCOMPANIED PAPAL SPECIAL ENVOY CARDINAL ROGER ETCHEGARAY TO BAGHDAD, GAVE DCM A FULL READOUT FEBRUARY 19 OF ETCHEGARAY'S VISIT AND FEBRUARY 15 MEETING WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN. ACCORDING TO COPPOLA, THE PAPAL MISSION TO BAGHDAD WAS UNDERTAKEN BOTH TO REINFORCE WITH SADDAM THE SERIOUSNESS OF HIS SITUATION AND HIS NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH UNMOVIC, WHILE ALSO SEEKING TO "CREATE A SENSE OF TRUST" WITH SADDAM THAT THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES COULD HELP THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ACHIEVE ITS GOAL OF IRAQI DISARMAMENT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO WAR. ON THE BASIS OF THE VISIT, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THAT FIRM, BUT NON-CONFRONTATIONAL, DIPLOMACY THAT AVOIDS "HUMILIATING" SADDAM CAN ACHIEVE IRAQ'S DISARMAMENT WITHOUT RESORT TO A WAR THAT THEY FEAR WOULD INFLAME FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAM WITH "INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES." COPPOLA VOICED THE HOLY SEE'S CONCERN AT HOW RECENT TRANSATLANTIC DIVISIONS AND A PERCEPTION OF DIVISION BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE U.S. HAVE PLAYED OUT IN THE PRESS. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED THUS FAR WITH IRAQ IS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE CREDIBLE THREAT OF FORCE AND INTERNATIONAL UNITY, AND THEY WORRY THAT PERCEPTIONS OF DIVISION WILL UNDERMINE THE PRESSURE ON SADDAM. WITH PM BLAIR SET TO MEET THE POPE FEBRUARY 22, EMBASSY BELIEVES A HIGH-LEVEL U.S. VISIT TO THE HOLY SEE COULD HELP REINFORCE

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THE PERCEPTION OF UNITY AND HIGHLIGHT THE SHARED U.S.-HOLY SEE DESIRE TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL DISARMAMENT OF IRAQ. (SEE ALSO PARA 9 ACTION REQUEST.) END SUMMARY.

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ETCHEGARAY DELIVERS POPE'S MESSAGE TO SADDAM  
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2. (C) HOLY SEE MFA MIDDLE EAST DIRECTOR MONS. FRANCO COPPOLA GAVE DCM AND POLOFF A DETAILED READOUT FEBRUARY 19 OF HIS WEEK-LONG TRIP TO BAGHDAD WITH PAPAL SPECIAL ENVOY CARDINAL ROGER ETCHEGARAY. COPPOLA TOLD US THE TRIP WAS UNDERTAKEN TO IMPRESS UPON SADDAM THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND TO URGE HIS FULL AND IMMEDIATE COOPERATION WITH UNSCR 1441. COPPOLA EMPHASIZED THAT THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES SADDAM HAS THUS FAR BEEN TOO PRONE TO PREVARICATION AND DECEPTION, AND THAT THE TRIP WAS SEEN BY THE VATICAN AS ITS LAST BEST CHANCE TO TALK SOME SENSE INTO SADDAM AND AVERT A WAR. RECOGNIZING THE "DICTATOR'S MENTALITY" THEY WOULD ENCOUNTER IN DELIVERING SUCH A MESSAGE, ETCHEGARAY SOUGHT NOT TO CHALLENGE SADDAM DIRECTLY, BUT TO GIVE HIM A SENSE THAT, BY WORKING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO MEET ITS DEMANDS FOR DISARMAMENT, HE COULD ALSO ACHIEVE WHAT HE WANTS (CONTINUED POWER). ETCHEGARAY DID IN FACT UNDERScore TO SADDAM THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION AND THE NEED TO WORK WITH UNMOVIC, TO WHICH SADDAM'S IMMEDIATE REACTION WAS BOTH DEFIANT AND FATALISTIC. HE OFFERED THE STANDARD LINE THAT IRAQ WAS COMPLYING, THAT THE U.S. WAS PURSUING A WAR OF AGGRESSION, AND THAT IRAQIS WOULD FIGHT TO THE END.

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DEALING WITH THE "DICTATOR MENTALITY"  
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3. (C) DESPITE SADDAM'S SURFACE OBSTINACY, HOWEVER, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THE INTERNATIONAL UNITY AND FIRM DIPLOMACY BACKED BY A CREDIBLE THREAT OF FORCE FROM THE U.S. AND OTHERS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SIGNIFICANT, IF INCOMPLETE, ADVANCES SINCE THE FALL, REFLECTED BY SADDAM'S ACCEPTANCE OF UNMOVIC, THE DECISION TO PERMIT OVERFLIGHTS, AND RECENT MOVEMENT ON

PRIVATE INTERVIEWS WITH IRAQI SCIENTISTS. THEY BELIEVE THAT FULL DISARMAMENT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH CONTINUED FIRM BUT SUBTLE DIPLOMACY THAT WOULD OFFER SADDAM BOTH A FACE-SAVING ESCAPE FROM HIS PREDICAMENT AND PERSONAL SURVIVAL. ACCORDING TO COPPOLA, THE KEY TO PROGRESS IN IRAQ WAS TO RECOGNIZE THAT CORNERED DICTATORS LIKE SADDAM WILL DIG IN WHEN CONFRONTED. "THEY ARE NOT USED TO DISCUSSING THINGS AND BEING CHALLENGED," COPPOLA OBSERVED. "IF YOU WANT TO GET THINGS FROM THEM, THEY CANNOT BE HUMILIATED." RATHER, THE HOLY SEE REGARDS IT AS ESSENTIAL TO ESTABLISH A DEGREE OF "TRUST" -- "NOT TRUST OF SADDAM TO BE SURE" -- BUT THE KIND OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN BUSINESSMEN THAT THERE IS SOMETHING IN IT FOR EVERYONE IF ALL PLAY BY THE RULES. IN THIS WAY,

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DOTE-00	PERC-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	CAEX-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01
	G-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/008W			

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INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY  
WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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SEES "LAST CHANCE FOR DIPLOMACY"

COPPOLA CONCLUDED, DIPLOMACY CAN SECURE THE DISARMAMENT THE  
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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WANTS AND THE SURVIVAL SADDAM SEEKS.

14. (C) TO BACK UP THIS CASE, THE HOLY SEE VIEWS THE FACT THAT SADDAM CONVENED HIS RUBBER-STAMP PARLIAMENT ON THE FRIDAY CONCLUDING THE HADJ TO PROMULGATE THE LAW BANNING WMD (WHICH WAS SUGGESTED BY ETCHEGARAY AT THE HOLY SEE'S REQUEST) AS A SIGN OF SADDAM'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. WORKING DISCRETELY RATHER THAN DIRECTLY WITH SADDAM, ETCHEGARAY HAD PRESSED THE IRAQIS TO OFFER SOME SORT OF SIGN THAT THEY HAD ABANDONED EFFORTS TO "NEGOTIATE" COMPLIANCE WITH THE I/C AND TO BUILD ON THEIR LIMITED COOPERATION BEFORE HANS BLIX' FEBRUARY 14 REPORT TO THE UNSC. THE HOLY SEE REGARDS THIS RESULT -- DESPITE ITS LIMITED EFFECT -- AS AN IMPORTANT SIGN OF IRAQI WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE IF NOT BACKED INTO A CORNER.

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WHAT DO WE WANT?  
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15. (C) IN DETERMINING THE WAY FORWARD, COPPOLA SAID THE APPROACH DEPENDED ON THE REAL GOAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IF THE GOAL IS TO REMOVE SADDAM, THEN HE AGREED THAT WAR IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND QUICKEST METHOD. HOWEVER, THE WORLD MUST THEN BE PREPARED TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DECISION -- WHICH COULD INCLUDE LOSS OF CONTROL OF SADDAM'S WMD TO TERRORISTS IN THE CHAOS OF BATTLE OR ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH, DEATH OF ALLIED SOLDIERS AND IRAQI CIVILIANS, ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION, AND, MOST WORRISOME TO THE HOLY SEE, THE UNLEASHING OF EVER GREATER FUNDAMENTALIST PASSIONS WITH "INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES." IF, ON THE OTHER  
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HAND, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY GENUINELY SEEKS TO DISARM IRAQ OF WMD, SUBTLE DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE THAT DOESN'T "HUMILIATE" SADDAM CAN WORK, COPPOLA BELIEVED. HE ASSERTED THAT EVER GREATER PRESSURE FROM INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING WOULD INCREASINGLY HINDER SADDAM'S ABILITY TO POSE A THREAT. FURTHERMORE, HE MAINTAINED THAT STEPPED UP INTELLIGENCE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT, AS WELL AS OCCASIONAL "SURGICAL STRIKES" ON SUSPECTED WEAPONS SITES WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ALL-OUT

WAR IN ACHIEVING DISARMAMENT WITHOUT GENERATING CHAOS THAT COULD LEAD TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WMD FROM IRAQ. PRESSED ON THIS POINT, COPPOLA ASSERTED THAT WAR WOULD CAUSE SUCH CHAOS IN IRAQ (WHICH HE ALREADY CHARACTERIZED AS A HOPELESSLY DISORGANIZED SOCIETY) THAT ANY WMD NOT IMMEDIATELY DESTROYED WOULD SURELY BE SPIRITED AWAY TO PRECISELY THOSE PLAYERS (INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS) MOST LIKELY TO USE THEM.

16. (C) IN THE DISARMAMENT SCENARIO, COPPOLA OBSERVED, GAINING IRAQI COOPERATION WOULD REQUIRE BUILDING SOME TRUST AND CONFIDENCE, WHICH IS WHAT THE ETCHEGARAY MISSION HOPED TO BEGIN. "THE ONLY WAY TO MOVE FORWARD IS AWAY FROM THE TV CAMERAS, TO MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND." HE NOTED THAT EVEN THE WORST PEOPLE OFTEN BELIEVE THEY ARE GOOD, THAT THEY ARE FOLLOWING THE RIGHT AND JUST PATH, OR, IN SADDAM'S CASE, THAT HE IS COLLABORATING. ETCHEGARAY'S MISSION, COPPOLA CONCLUDED, SOUGHT TO CREATE AN OPENING TO CONVINCE SADDAM THAT HE COULD OBTAIN WHAT HE WANTS BETTER IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RATHER THAN IN CONFRONTATION WITH IT. THAT SAID, THE HOLY SEE RECOGNIZES THAT TIME IS NOT ON THE SIDE OF PEACE UNLESS SADDAM ACCEPTS THE NEED TO COOPERATE FULLY.

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THE MOOD IN BAGHDAD  
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17. (C) ASKED HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION OF IRAQIS HE MET WHILE IN BAGHDAD, COPPOLA SAID THEY ARE "RESIGNED TO WAR, FATALISTIC IN THE ARAB WAY." HE SAID MANY APPEAR TO WANT TO LEAVE, AND ARE MAKING PLANS TO DO SO, BUT THAT THE REGIME HAS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE - IN ORDER TO HAVE AS MANY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AS POSSIBLE SHOULD WAR ERUPT. GIVEN THE RISKS IRAQI CIVILIANS WOULD FACE, COPPOLA INFORMED US THAT THE HOLY SEE HAD DECIDED NOT TO RESPOND TO A J5 REQUEST CONVEYED TO THEM TO LIST AND IDENTIFY HOLY SEE DIPLOMATIC AND OTHER CATHOLIC SITES ON SATELLITE IMAGERY. COPPOLA SAID "WE CANNOT SAY IT'S NOT 'OK' TO BOMB HERE, BUT IT IS 'OK' TO BOMB THERE."

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) AS SECRETARY OF STATE SODANO CLARIFIED IN AN INTERVIEW YESTERDAY, THE HOLY SEE IS NOT PACIFIST, BUT IS SEEKING TO BE

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DOTE-00	PERC-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	CAEX-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01
	G-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/008W			

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SEES "LAST CHANCE FOR DIPLOMACY"

A PEACEMAKER, "WORKING INTENSELY TO PREVENT THE OUTBREAK OF  
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CONFLICTS." FOLLOWING ETCHEGARAY'S MISSION, THE HOLY SEE IS GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC THAT DISARMAMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED PEACEFULLY, AS THEY CAME AWAY WITH A SENSE THAT IRAQ NOW UNDERSTANDS IT NEEDS TO BE GENUINELY, AND NOT BEGRUDGINGLY, COLLABORATIVE. WHILE THE ETCHEGARAY VISIT WAS THE HOLY SEE'S LAST, BEST SHOT AT CONVINCING SADDAM TO COMPLY, WE CAN EXPECT

THE HOLY SEE TO CONTINUE TO PRESS ITS CASE PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THAT WAR SHOULD BE THE VERY LAST OPTION. MOREOVER, THE HOLY SEE'S OWN "CONSTITUENT" INTERESTS -- THE PHYSICAL SAFETY OF MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS LIVING IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES BOTH DURING AND AFTER THE WAR -- WILL BE A FOREMOST CONCERN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE HOLY SEE FULLY SHARES OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE DANGERS PRESENTED BY INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND OF AN UNFETTERED SADDAM ARMED WITH WMD. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH THE GROWING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF TRANSATLANTIC DISUNITY AND OF A SPLIT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE VATICAN, GIVEN THEIR BELIEF THAT WE ARE ALL SEEKING THE SAME GOAL OF IRAQI DISARMAMENT.

19. (C) ACTION REQUEST: THE POPE MET WITH UN SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN FEBRUARY 19 AND WILL MEET PRIME MINISTER BLAIR FEBRUARY 22. WE EXPECT THE POPE WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS FOR A RESOLUTION THAT AVOIDS WAR. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE MEDIA SPECULATION ABOUT A POTENTIAL PAPAL EMISSARY TO WASHINGTON REFLECTING THE HOLY SEE'S DESIRE FOR GREATER CONTACT WITH WASHINGTON ON THE IRAQ ISSUE, BUT THE HOLY SEE HAS BEEN WARY OF BILATERALIZING THE CONFLICT BY SENDING EMISSARIES TO BAGHDAD AND WASHINGTON. IN LIGHT OF THE HOLY SEE'S DESIRE TO TONE DOWN PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITS DESIRE TO CONTINUE PUSHING FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS, EMBASSY STRONGLY BELIEVES  
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THAT A MEETING BETWEEN A SENIOR USG OFFICIAL AND THE POPE WOULD SERVE TO REINFORCE OUR SHARED OBJECTIVE OF PEACEFUL IRAQI DISARMAMENT WHILE HELPING OVERCOME PERCEPTIONS OF DIVISION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE HOLY SEE AT THIS CRITICAL TIME.  
NICHOLSON

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